

REMARKS**A. Status of the Claims and Explanation of the Amendments**

Claims 1-17 are currently pending. Claims 1-4, 6-9, and 13-15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,597,999 to Kinba et al. (“Kinba”). Additionally, claims 11, 12, and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Kinba, in view of an Official Notice by the Examiner.

The Examiner has objected to claims 5, 10 and 17 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but has indicated that these claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

In this paper, Applicants have amended independent claims 1, 6, and 13 to incorporate the elements of claims 5, 10, and 17, respectively. Claims 5, 10, and 17 have been cancelled accordingly.

New claims 18-20 have been added. Support for these amendments is found throughout the specification. See for example, paragraphs 27-50 of Applicants’ specification and Figure 3. Applicants respectfully submit that no new matter has been added by including these new claims.

Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1, 6, and 13 are now in condition for allowance, as are all of the remaining claims that depend therefrom. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§102(b) and §103(a) are respectfully requested.

Additionally, claims 18-20 incorporate elements of claims 5, 10, and 17, which were deemed by the Examiner to contain allowable subject matter. Accordingly, these claims are also in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims and allowance of this application.

AUTHORIZATION

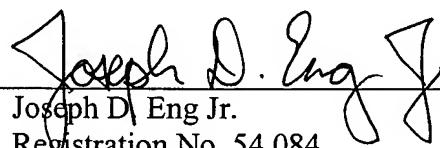
The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required for consideration of this Amendment to Deposit Account No. 13-4500, Order No. 1232-5153. A DUPLICATE OF THIS DOCUMENT IS ATTACHED.

In the event that an extension of time is required, or which may be required in addition to that requested in a petition for an extension of time, the Commissioner is requested to grant a petition for that extension of time which is required to make this response timely and is hereby authorized to charge any fee for such an extension of time or credit any overpayment for an extension of time to Deposit Account No. 13-4500, Order No. 1232-5153. A DUPLICATE OF THIS DOCUMENT IS ATTACHED.

Respectfully submitted,
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